

acquisition of off-reservation land to be used for casino gambling.”¹⁹² (Emphasis in original.) Gunderson issued a press release on May 2 stating that his opposition was based on his fear that approval “would set a dangerous national precedent.” On May 3, 1995, Rep. Tom Barrett (D-Wis.) also wrote to the Secretary to express his opposition, relying in large part on the opposition of “the Ho-Chunk Nation, along with other tribes.” Barrett added that the Hudson proposal was “really an attempt by the current owners of the dog track at Hudson to shore up their operations.” Rep. Klug also sent a letter on May 3, forwarding a letter from JoAnn Jones expressing the opposition of his constituents, the Ho-Chunk Nation; Klug did not take a position himself.

In interviews, Interior employees generally agreed that the level of contacts from members of Congress relating to the Hudson application was high, but not unusual for an application to take off-reservation land into trust for gaming, given the controversial nature of such applications. At the time of the Hudson application, though, few of the participants in the decision-making process at Interior had any point of reference with which to compare their experience on the Hudson application. Melanie Beller, the director of the DOI congressional relations office, observed that contacts by members of Congress, which are frequent, are perceived with greater concern by the Department because of the role that the Congress plays in appropriations for BIA and the rest of Interior.

¹⁹²A staff member from Gunderson’s office had contacted Sibbison on April 19, 1995, requesting information about whether DOI had approved any off-reservation gaming land acquisitions, and if so, how many, and how many were “in the pipeline.” DOI E-mail generated by Heather Sibbison, April 19, 1995. Gunderson’s assertion that DOI had not approved any such applications (presumably based on his staff’s earlier contact with DOI) was incorrect. *See* Section II.C.1., *supra*.